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ABSTRACT

Developed by educators from the Emily Griffith Opportunity School, this teacher's guide presents an 8-hour course in writing for police officers. The course is designed to help officers improve the accuracy and appearances of their reports and to help them take responsibility for becoming more independent writers. Each of the four lessons in the course focuses on an area of writing that will give the writer the tools to become a more accurate, concise communicator: sample reports and business letters; grammar, punctuation, and spelling; report writing and writing organization; and editing reports. Lessons consist of objectives, materials lists, time needed, learning activities, and handouts. An appendix contains additional sample reports that students can use to practice editing; handout answer keys are provided. Contains eight resources. (KC)

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ED 378 442

WRITING IT RIGHT: A WRITING COURSE FOR POLICE OFFICERS

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June 15, 1994

CE 068 147

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WRITING IT RIGHT: A WRITING COURSE FOR POLICE OFFICERS

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Mary Liles Gravely

June 15, 1994

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKPLACE LITERACY PROJECT

This module was developed by educators from Emily Griffith Opportunity School as part of a National Workplace Education grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education. A cooperative effort between the business and education communities, the program was designed specifically to enhance employees' literacy skills.

Direct benefits to the workforce include improved morale and motivation, self-esteem, team work, and promotional opportunities.

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of our partners. In addition we recognize all of the students who participated in classes and who provided us with invaluable feedback for strengthening future classes.

We hope partnerships such as these will provide the catalyst for developing new or continued on-site educational opportunities.

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OVERVIEW

In the field of police work, written communication is an integral part of an individual's work day. The writing varies from writing letters and inter-office memos to filling in forms and writing narratives that describe a problem the officer investigated. Much of the writing that officers do is in the form of reports. Since some of these written reports will become court documents, each report must present all of the elements of an investigation in a style that is accurate and clear.

This course, "Writing It Right," has been designed to help officers improve the accuracy and appearance of their reports. It also encourages them to take the responsibility of becoming a more independent writer.

The time frame for the course covers four two-hour sessions. Each session focuses on an area of writing that will give the writer the tools to become a more accurate, concise communicator. While students cover specific writing areas, they and the instructor will create a handbook of writing. At the end of the course students can continue to use this handbook as a reference tool when they write.

Four sessions is a very short time to see major changes in a person's writing; therefore, the emphasis in these lessons is on presenting material about the writing process that police officers will find useful. These officers will be given some very specific information about the writing process to help them make appropriate choices as writers. Since the information will be recorded in a handbook format, the instructor should encourage students to use this handbook whenever they write until the information becomes an integral part of them.

The lessons in this module are addressed to the teacher. They include handouts, which can be copied, that were developed from police report models. Also, each teacher is encouraged to create additional handouts from the writing of the students in the class.

NOTE: Though this course was designed for police officers, parts of it can be used to teach any report writing course. Also, the course could be expanded to cover a longer time frame by giving the students more actual reports to revise and improve.

LESSON I

OBJECTIVES:

- The students and teacher will talk informally about themselves to create a comfortable classroom atmosphere.
- The students will write a sample report or a business letter.

MATERIALS: Handouts

TIME: 2 hours

ACTIVITIES:

1. Introduce yourself and share some information about yourself with the students. Then ask the students to give their names and tell something about themselves. When students shares their writing, they share themselves. It is very important to begin to create a classroom atmosphere where students feel safe to read and discuss their work.

2. Give students the Report Writing Questionnaire (Handout 1:1) to complete in order to learn more about their needs as writers.

3. Talk with the students about writing. Give them information such as
   a. Improvement is slow.
   b. Writing takes planning, revision, and practice. (Show them a rough draft of your own writing and the finished product.)
   c. Get students to talk about their own experience as writers. How often do they write? What do they write? Do they draft on the computer? Do they edit on the computer or do they use a hard copy?

4. Give them the report writing assignment and the letter writing assignment. (Handout 1:2) Then have them select one of the exercises to complete during the class period.

5. Give students the article on police report writing "Get It All, and Get It Right." It is found in the March, 1994 issue of Police. (See list of "Helpful Resources" p.51) Students should have read the article by the third class meeting.

HANDOUT 1:1

REPORT WRITING QUESTIONNAIRE

As I begin to work with you, I would like to know more about you as a police officer and as a writer of police reports. By answering the following questions, you will help guide me in planning a course that, I hope, will meet some of your needs as a writer.

1. What do you like most about your job?

2. What do you like least?

3. How do you feel about the writing that you do for your job? Is writing reports easy for you? Difficult?

4. Do you try to eliminate problems in your writing before sending the report to your supervisor, or do you send the report to him/her with very little editing?

5. Do you use spellcheck and grammarcheck after writing a report?

   Do you depend on these two programs to find all of your errors?

HANDOUT 1:1, p. 2

6. Which of the following areas would you like to see us cover in this class? Check all of those that you believe would be useful to you.

_____ Punctuation _____ Spelling

_____ Capitalization _____ Organizing information

_____ Identifying facts and using details to explain those facts

7. In addition to those things you checked, identify any other writing areas that you would like to address.

8. Identify one main writing goal that you would like to achieve in this class.

_____ _____

(Name) (Date)

HANDOUT 1:2

LETTER WRITING EXERCISE

Write a business letter to Lt. Fred Smith of the Denver Police Department, 1331 Cherokee Street, Denver, CO 80201. This letter should thank him for sending two of his men to your police department to conduct a workshop called "Reducing Stress and Managing Time." The members of the class responded positively to the officers' presentation, and your letter should indicate this.

Use the correct form for a business letter, and do your best writing. Make sure that you correct any errors before turning in your paper.

REPORT WRITING EXERCISE

The piece of writing that follows will give you information about a crime that supposedly occurred. Use this information to write a report that could be used in court. Do your best report writing, making sure that you correct any errors and improve any awkward sentences. Also organize the material better than it is presented in the original.

This exercise will give me a chance to see where you are as a writer and will help me make plans for those areas that we need to cover in class.

Date of the Crime: March 16, 1994

Victim of the Crime: Joe M. Smith

Officer who investigated the Crime: (your name)

HANDOUT 1:2, p. 2

Victim Smith related that a man walked over to him while he was standing beside his car at approximately 11:15 P. M. Smith said he had parked in a space on the south side of 9th avenue near its intersection with Broadway and that he was using his key to open the door of his car. Smith said that before he could turn around the man put a gun in his back and asked for his wallet. Smith said he gave the man the wallet and when the man opened it and found only two dollars in cash he threw it in the shrubbery next to the building. I went over to the shrubbery and found the wallet lying open on the ground with a driver's license and some papers lying beside it as if they had fallen out. Smith said after the man threw the wallet he pushed him against the car and told him to open the door. Then Smith said the man shoved him aside and he fell on the pavement and landed on his arm. I noticed Smith's shirt sleeve near the elbow was torn and that it had some blood and dirt near the tear. Then Smith said the man opened the glove compartment and pulled everything out. I noticed two tapes, a Buick car manual, a map, and several papers lying on the seat and in the floor of the car. I observed a muddy footprint on the floor of the car on the driver's side. Smith said that after the man pulled everything out of the glove compartment, he got out of the car, slammed the door, and ran in the direction of Broadway. Smith described the man as six foot five, 250 pounds, with dark brown hair, wearing a red baseball cap, a dark brown leather aviator jacket, and blue jeans. I asked if the man took anything and Smith said only a black umbrella and a Willie Nelson tape. Smith said that all of the stuff in the wallet was still there.

LESSON II

OBJECTIVES: The students will identify those punctuation rules that are used most often in their writing.

MATERIALS: Several grammar handbooks
A flipchart
Handout on spelling
Student folders
Student papers from the first class

TIME: 2 hours

ACTIVITIES:

1. Hand out the students' writings from the last class with the spelling and punctuation errors marked. Just focus on those writing problems at this time. After students have seen their papers, take them up. They will get them back at the last class meeting.

2. Give each student a folder that contains the material on spelling. (Handout 2:1) This is the beginning of their handbook. Most students will write on a computer that has a spellcheck program. This spelling handout is a reference tool to be used along with the spellcheck program.

3. Divide the class into small groups. Then give each group a grammar textbook. Have one group look up

punctuation rules for the comma; one group, rules for the apostrophe; one group, rules for the parentheses; and one group, rules for the colon. Each group will select those rules that apply most often to police report writing. Each group will write the rules in their own words to share with the rest of the class.

4. Have students read their rewritten rules as you write these rules on a chart. Then, before the next class meeting, type up the rules and add examples taken from the students' own writings to illustrate each rule. This will become more material for the student's writing handbook. (Handout 3:1 is an example of the rules my students identified.)

5. If there is time, give each group either a report to revise or sentences pulled from their writing to improve. Let them work as a team. Then talk about the revisions either in this class or the next.

HANDOUT 2:1

SPELLING

Misspelling is an error that stands out in writing, especially to those readers in the audience who spell well. Misspelled words communicate far more than the dictionary meaning of the word. Some readers see the writer of misspelled words as careless, uneducated, or worse. Being a poor speller, however, does not necessarily mean someone is uneducated. I have known college professors who have difficulty with spelling. Still misspelled words leave a negative impression on the reader. They may imply that if the writer wasn't careful with his spelling, then he also may not have been careful gathering information for a report.

If poor spelling does convey these negative impressions, how does a poor speller improve the looks of his writing?

The English language has many inconsistencies in its spelling system. To try to memorize the spelling of all of these vocabulary words would be an impossible task. To become a better speller, you need only to learn a few spelling rules and always have a dictionary available. If you doubt the spelling of a word, check it in the dictionary.

You may wonder though, "How do I look up a word when I don't know how to spell it?"

First, write down your best guess of the spelling of the word. Then look up that word in the dictionary. If you can't find it spelled that way, scan the page and see if it might be somewhere else on that page.

Then if you still can't find it and it begins with a prefix, look up the root word. Sometimes you will find the word you are looking for under the root word.

If that doesn't work, think of other ways your word might be spelled. Could the e possibly be an i? Could pre possibly be per or pur? Try several different possible guesses, and you should be able to find the word.

HANDOUT 2:1, p. 2

Going through all of these steps may sound like a lot of work, but improving your spelling takes effort. If you try these steps, you will become more aware of words and your spelling will improve. Also as you find the correct spelling of words you use frequently and are unsure of, make a list of them for a quick reference.

If you are working on a computer, use the spellcheck. It may not find all of your misspelled words, but it will help you find most of them. With computer spellcheck programs and dictionaries at your fingertips, you should be able to produce a finished piece of writing that has every word spelled correctly.

Now for a few rules to help you spell better.

1. A prefix is one or more letters added to the beginning of a word. When a prefix is added to a word, the prefix and the word remain the same.

For example: dis + satisfied = dissatisfied

2. A suffix is one or more letters added at the end of a word. Most often when adding a suffix to a word, the spelling of the suffix and the spelling of the word remain the same.

Exceptions:

a. When the root ends in a silent e and the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the e.

For example: write + ing = writing

If there is a soft g or a soft c before the e and you are adding able or ous, keep the e.

For example: courage + ous = courageous
notice + able = noticeable

b. When the root ends in y preceded by a consonant, change the y to i and add the suffix.

For example: marry + es = marries

If the suffix begins with an i, leave the y as it is.

For example: marry + ing = marrying

c. When the following three situations exist, the final consonant of a root has to be doubled when a suffix is added:

1. When the stress is on the last syllable.

2. When the root ends with a single consonant preceded by a single vowel, and that consonant isn't h, w, or x.

3. When the suffix starts with a vowel.

For example: hop + ing = hopping

Memorizing these few rules may help you to spell those troublesome words correctly.

HANDOUT 2:1, p. 4

TROUBLESOME WORDS

The following sets of words are often confused and cause spelling problems for many of us. If you have difficulty with any of these words, this can be a reference tool for you.

1. accept — (v) to receive or take in
   I will accept the award.

   except — (p) to leave out
   All went to the game except him.

2. advice — (n) a recommendation
   Sue gave me good advice.

   advise — (v) to give counsel to
   My accountant advised me to put money in a tax deferred annuity account.

3. affect — (v) to produce a result
   Pollen affects my hay fever.

   effect — (n) the results of something (usually preceded by the word the or an)
   The members of the community surveyed **the** effects of the storm.

4. already — (adv) before a given time
   The plane is already here.

   all ready — each person is ready
   Are you all ready to go?

   all right — always two words: never written as alright

5. brake — (n) the pedal used to slow a vehicle

   break — (v) to shatter, smash

HANDOUT 2:1, p. 5

6. capitol — (n) a building occupied by the legislature

   capital — (n or adj) a city; wealth accumulated; of major importance; used to refer to letters which aren't lower case; punishable by death

7. forth — (adv) forward or onward
   James, come forth.

   fourth — (adj) the number
   She is in fourth grade.

8. lead — (v) (pronounced **leed**) to go before; to show the way
   The dog will lead me home.

   lead — (n or adj) (pronounced **led**) a bluish-gray metal
   He had a lead pipe.

   led — (v) past tense of the verb "to lead"
   The dog led me right to my door.

9. loose — (adj) not tight; unconfined
   She wore loose clothing.

   lose — (v) to come to be without something; to be unable to find something.
   Did you lose your watch.

10. paid — (v) past tense of pay (the spelling payed is not appropriate.)
    Jennifer paid her bills.

11. past — (n) the time gone by
    A history buff likes to study the past.

    passed — (v) past tense form of pass
    I passed the test.

HANDOUT 2:1, p. 6

12. principle (n) a fundamental truth on which other truths are based
John's principles are an indication of his character.

principal (n or adj) the director of a school; the most important
She presented the principal talk of the series.

13. stationary (adj) cannot be moved

stationery (n) writing paper

14. thorough (adj) neglecting nothing
The officer made a thorough search.

though (conj) meaning *in spite of the fact that*
Even though he is my friend, I must hire the best qualified.

through (prep) in one end and out the other
The wind blew through the open door.

thru not a word in standard written English

15. weather (n) the atmospheric conditions
The weather will be partly cloudy with temperatures in the seventies.

whether (conj) used to introduce two or more alternatives
It matters not whether we stay or go.

LESSON III

OBJECTIVES: The students will demonstrate a knowledge of basic report writing.

The students will demonstrate the ability to organize a piece of writing.

MATERIALS: Handouts
Overhead projector
Overhead transparency of the Significant Incident Report
Transparency markers

TIME: 2 hours

ACTIVITIES:

1. Finish any business from the last class.

2. Give students the handouts on punctuation and go over them with the students. (Handout 3:1)

3. Give students the sample memo and the material on writing a business letter. (Handout 3:2) Discuss the essential parts and the form of each.

4. Give students the questions on the information from the article on police report writing, "Get It All, and Get It Right." (Handout 3:3) Have them work alone for 8-10 minutes. Then have them work with a

partner for 5-8 minutes. They may use the article to look up their answers. Collect the papers and check them before the next class meeting.

5. Discuss with students whether their method of drafting is that of a planner/writer or a writer/reviser. Also discuss the assets and liabilities of each method. (Handout 3:4)

6. Give students the handout on Planning Strategies (Handout 3:5), and discuss the importance of determining the purpose of a report before beginning to write.

7. Give students the report of the Lewis Clinic (Handout 3:6), and have them analyze it according to purpose and structure. What is the main purpose for this report? (Answers may vary somewhat, but basically the purpose is to show that Marc Williams is dangerous and should be arrested.) Is the report written in chronological order? Would it be more effective if certain parts were rearranged? Deleted? (The overall organization of the report is chronological and works fairly well. Parts of it, however, need to be revised and improved.)

8. Have students divide into groups of two. They should write the purpose of the report at the top of a sheet of paper. Then working as partners and using that sheet of paper, they should rewrite the first three paragraphs, improving them and making them conform to the purpose. Before students begin revising the report, go over the entire report with them pointing out weaknesses in structure and clarity. (Copy the report Handout 3:6, p. 1 & 2 on a

transparency. Then using the students' ideas, the information on Handout 3:7, and an overhead projector, guide students in finding weaknesses in the report. Write these problems on the transparency for students to copy on their own handouts.)

9. Before the next class, one of the partners should make a copy of what the group had written in class. Then each person should finish revising the report that he and his partner began. These revisions will be due at the next class meeting.

HANDOUT 3:1

PUNCTUATION RULES

The following rules should be helpful to you when writing reports, letters, or memos.

USING THE COMMA

Remember if you cannot give a reason for using a comma, you probably don't need one. A good rule to remember when punctuating with commas:

WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT

1. Use a comma before and, but, or, nor, for when using that word to join two complete thoughts into one sentence.

Sentences:

He gave the cup containing the bullet to Dr. James Smith.
Dr. Smith examined the contents.

The two sentences joined using **and**:

He gave the cup containing the bullet to Dr. James Smith, and Dr. Smith examined the contents.

Common error:
Often times writers will place a comma before and, but, or, nor, for when the word joins two verbs rather than two complete thoughts.

Example: Officer Brown then placed the contents into the evidence bag, and sealed the bag.

The comma is not needed in that sentence since the and is joining two verbs. Sealed the bag is not a complete thought.

2. Use a comma to set off a group of words at the beginning of a sentence if the words contain a subject and verb and do not form a complete thought. This word group will begin with words like before, after, if, although, until, when, where.

Example: After the bullet was removed by Dr. Smith, it was placed into the specimen cup.

Do not use a comma if the order is reversed, and the word group comes at the end of the sentence.

Incorrect: Dr. Smith placed the bullet in the specimen cup, after it was removed from the victim.

Correct: Dr. Smith placed the bullet in the specimen cup after it was removed from the victim.

3. Use a comma to set off an introductory phrase that contains an ing or ed word.

Example: Without opening it, Officer Brown sealed the specimen cup.

Faced with the two choices, Dr. Smith accepted the more difficult one.

4. Use commas to set off words or phrases that interrupt the flow of a sentence. A comma on both sides of these words or phrases indicates that the words can be removed from the sentence and that the sentence will still be a complete thought.

Example:

a phrase that renames	Dr. Smith, the emergency room physician, turned over the specimen to Officer Brown.
words that act as transitions	Dr. Broadnax, however, was the person who identified the source. In fact, Officer Brown had acquired all of the information.

5. Use commas to separate items in a series.

Example: Dr. Smith opened the cup, verified the contents, closed the cup, and turned it over to me.

6. Use a comma after the parts of an address.

Example: The victim whose address is 1401 Carter Boulevard, Denver, CO 80120, was taken to the emergency room.

The suspect stated he had lived in Boulder, Colorado, for fifteen years.

7. Use a comma after numbers in a date if the date includes more than one number. Also use a comma after the day of the week if it comes before the date.

Example: He was born on April 15, 1942, in a small Montana town.

On Monday, February 10, he visited the office.

HANDOUT 3:1, p. 4

USING THE APOSTROPHE

An apostrophe is a mark of punctuation used to show possession both literally and abstractly. It is also used to show that letters have been omitted in contractions and to form the plurals of numbers, letters, and words used as words.

TO FORM THE POSSESSION OF WORDS . . .

1. For singular words or plural words that do not end s, add an apostrophe and an s.

Example: This was the New York Police Department's jurisdiction.

The victim's coat was torn.

The children's playhouse was destroyed.

2. For plural words which end in s, place the apostrophe after the s.

Example: The officers' jurisdiction covered a ten block area. (This sentence means that more than one officer worked this ten block area.)

3. For compound words place the apostrophe and s on the last word.

Example: brother-in-law's car

New York Police Department's jurisdiction

Secretary of Education's plan

HANDOUT 3:1, p. 5

TO FORM CONTRACTIONS . . .

1. Use apostrophes to indicate that letters have been omitted in contractions.

Example:	they're	(they are)
	didn't	(did not)
	don't	(do not)

2. Remember the possessive pronouns its, hers, theirs, his, ours, and whose do not use an apostrophe.

Example: it's mean it is

who's means who is

TO FORM CERTAIN PLURALS . . .

Use apostrophes to form the plural of numbers, letters, and words used as words.

Example: b's - - more than one b

There are two b's in the word.

2's - - more than one 2

Her address has four 2's.

HANDOUT 3:1, p. 6

USING THE COLON AND THE PARENTHESES

1. Use the colon as a formal introducer to call attention to what follows. The colon is used after a group of words that either includes a number or ends in the words as follows.

Example: The items missing from the car were as follows: sunglasses, a raincoat, and an umbrella.

Three items were missing from the car: sunglasses, a raincoat, and an umbrella.

Do not use a colon after the verb "to be." The words which make up the verb "to be" are is, am, are, was, were, be, been.

Example: (Incorrect) The three items missing from the car were: sunglasses, a raincoat, and an umbrella.

(Correct) The three items missing from the car were sunglasses, a raincoat, and an umbrella.

2. Use a colon after the greeting in a business letter.

3. Use parentheses to set off supplementary material.

Example: I (Officer Joan Terry, 62-106) received a call from the emergency room on April 10, 1994, at 1136 hours.

HANDOUT 3:2

CHARACTERISTICS OF A BUSINESS LETTER

1. Business letters must be brief. Avoid using unnecessary words that merely repeat and add no additional information. For example, if you use an opening such as "I would like to thank you for being in charge of the committee meeting," you can eliminate the first four words and make the sentence more efficient.

2. The body of a business letter should be single-spaced, with a double space between paragraphs.

3. The greeting must match the first line of the inside address.

   a. If you know the person's name, use his or her title, the last name, and a colon.

      Dear Dr. Smith:

   b. If you only know the title of the person, use

      Dear Sir or Madam:

   c. If you are writing to an organization, use

      Ladies and Gentlemen:

4. Business letters should have appropriate spacing. If you have 1-2 paragraphs, put the date on line 19 and use a two inch margin. If you have 3-4 paragraphs, put the date on line 16 and use a one and one-half inch margin. If you have 5 plus paragraphs, put the date on line 13, and use a one inch margin. The body of the letter should be approximately in the center of the page.

HANDOUT 3:2, p. 2

EFG Inc.

1123 Bellview Avenue, Terran City, Denver, CO 80999
(303) 888-8990 fax (393) 254-0000

April 11, 1994

Mrs. Jane Taylor
2345 Kings Road
Mineral, PA 19068-2005

Dear Mrs. Taylor:

Some of the questions you raised in your recent letter are difficult to answer because of changes that have taken place in the office. If you would like to schedule an appointment to discuss your concerns, I will be happy to see you.

Please call my secretary at (303) 888-8992 for an appointment. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

James Smith
Director of Research

JS/mg

HANDOUT 3:2, p. 3

EFG Inc. 1123 Bellview Avenue, Terran City, Denver, CO 80999
(303) 888-8990 fax (393) 254-0000

Date

4-6 spaces

April 11, 1994

Inside Address

2 spaces

Mrs. Jane Taylor
2345 Kings Road
Mineral, PA 19068-2005

Greeting

2 spaces

Dear Mrs. Taylor:

Body

Some of the questions you raised in your recent letter are difficult to answer because of changes that have taken place in the office. If you would like to schedule an appointment to discuss your concerns, I will be happy to see you.

2 spaces between paragraphs

Please call my secretary at (303) 888-8992 for an appointment. I look forward to meeting with you.

2 spaces

Closing

Sincerely,

4 spaces

Signature

James Smith

Title

Director of Research

JS/mg

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HANDOUT 3:2, p. 4

TO: Jane Smith, Chief of Police

FROM: Lt. Fletcher Cartwight

DATE: April 17, 1994

SUBJECT: Police Report Writing Class

The Police Report Writing Class has been scheduled for the next four Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:00 P.M. until 3:00 P.M. Each member of the department will be required to take the class. Only personnel with scheduling conflicts will be excused.

HANDOUT 3:3

QUESTIONS ON THE ARTICLE "GET IT ALL, AND GET IT RIGHT"

Answer the following questions completely, writing the answer in your own words. You may refer to the article for an answer whenever necessary.

1. When putting down the details in a case, you need to keep your purpose for writing in mind. According to the article, what three questions should you ask yourself?

2. Circle all of the following suggestions that appear in the article.

   a. Find a study buddy who is equally serious about improving writing.

   b. Get a readable grammar handbook to use as a reference.

   c. Depend upon your supervisor to be your editor and to help you eliminate your mistakes.

   d. With each report that you write, practice using those things you are learning about writing, and remember that progress takes time.

3. What is the organizational structure for a police report?

HANDOUT 3:3, p. 2

4. Should you use long or short sentences in your report?

5. Reports should be written using which tense?

6. Explain the difference between active and passive voice.

7. Which voice is usually more effective?

8. The writer of the article encourages you to "Show, don't tell." What does this mean?

9. Is proofreading an important step? Why?

10. What do errors in a report imply about the writer?

HANDOUT 3:4

WHICH TYPE OF WRITER ARE YOU?

Planner/Writer	Writer/Reviser
-- Spends much time making plans, even how to handle specific parts of the piece of writing	-- Sees that many rewrites can refine, tighten, and improve a draft
-- Can work well in a limited time frame	-- Knows that working quickly, sometimes in snatches of thoughts, can lead to new connections
-- May see the drafting stage as a time to pour out information rather than a chance to refine certain areas that turn out differently than planned	-- May be unaware that planning before writing can save time and help meet deadlines

Modified from *The Write Stuff: Memos and Short Reports.*

HANDOUT 3:5

PLANNING STRATEGIES BEFORE WRITING

1. List those elements you need in your report. Jot them down any way they come into your head. Don't censor yourself. Let the words flow on to the paper.

2. Once you have a list of ideas, ask yourself this question: "What is the purpose of this piece of writing?" Write down the purpose in a sentence or two, and place it where you can see it. This statement of purpose should be in front of you as you move through each step of the writing process. After you formulate a statement of purpose, ask yourself, "What idea/ideas do I want to leave with my readers? Who will read this? Why will they read this? Will they understand my purpose?"

3. After you have determined the purpose of the piece of writing, look at the list you have created. Begin to eliminate those unnecessary points that do not help you achieve your purpose. Also begin to arrange the points you will use in the best order for the report.

HANDOUT 3:6

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REPORT

LOCATION: Riverdale Place
3948 Riverdale Avenue
Greenfield, Any State
M. A. Lewis Clinic, Room 212

On 04-16-92 at 1330 hours, I (Officer James Smith) was dispatched to 3948 Riverdale on a report of threats that were made to the staff. I was advised that a Greenfield PD officer had responded and was on the scene. Also, I was advised that the suspect had threatened to show up at 1400 hours and blow up the Riverdale office.

On arrival at the scene, I was unable to locate a Greenfield PD officer and was told that he had left to check the suspect's address. I interviewed the staff at the M. A. Lewis Clinic, 3948 Riverdale, and could find no one who had been directly threatened. I talked with Dr. Mary Matthews, M. D. and Dr. Fred Sitton, M. D., and they related the following information:

Shelia Adams had recently been transferred to the care of Dr. Sitton and was seen at the Lewis Clinic Emergency Room on 04-15-92, by Dr. Sitton for a condition related to a seizure disorder -- near toxic level of Phenobarbital in her system. S. Adams is deaf and reads lips but telephonically communicates by the use of her fiancee, Marc Williams. While in the Lewis Clinic ER, S. Adams was accompanied by her fiancee. Dr. Sitton said that M. Williams was was irate about having to come in at the late hour and then get nothing by way of drugs to take care of his fiancee's headache. Dr. Sitton said that M. Williams was irrational confused and may have been mentally impaired in some way. Dr. Sitton said that the couple refused to cooperate with the Lewis staff and complained to the nurse manager about the substandard care they had been given. Dr. Sitton advised that after he left, M. Williams threatened the Lewis staff verbally making references to shooting some one. Dr. Sitton said that he was called at the M. A. Lewis Clinic at about noon on 04-16-92 by the nurse manager and was told about the threat.

Dr. Matthews then advised me that M. Williams had been calling the M. A. Lewis Clinic most of the day and talked with several of the staff including herself and made no threat of violence. Dr. Matthews said that M. Williams even denied most of the previous night's contact and retracted any threat that he might have made. Dr. Matthews said that M. Williams was upset about the care that they had received and needed something stronger than Tylenol to take care of Adam's headaches. Dr. Matthews also added that she talked with William's sister and she was also irrational and upset. Dr. Matthews stated that the couple had been advised that S. Adams will be refused treatment in the future at the M. A. Lewis Clinic. Dr. Matthews sent home all employees from the center except those necessary to reschedule appointments and close up.

While on the scene, Greenfield PD Officer R. Smith 61-205 called and reported that the address given by the M. A. Lewis Clinic was the address of Williams' associate and that Williams had not lived there for some time. He also reported that the associate told him that Williams had a history of drug abuse and that he did own weapons, a hunting rifle, a .38 revolver and a .22 semi-auto. Smith added that the associate told him that Williams bragged about killing a person in a drug deal. Smith said that the phone number was a good one and that Williams' actual address was in South Haven.

I contacted Sgt. R. Robbins with the information I had obtained and a request was teletyped to South Haven PD to attempt a pick up on Williams at his South Haven address based on a warrant out of Greenfield.

Officer M. Anthony and myself remained at the M. A. Lewis Clinic until the remaining staff left for the night.

At 1715 hours South Haven PD advised that the suspect Williams had been arrested.

HANDOUT 3:7

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REPORT

LOCATION: Riverdale Place
3948 Riverdale Avenue
Greenfield, Any State
M. A. Lewis Clinic, Room 212

On 04-16-92 at 1330 hours, I (Officer James Smith) was dispatched to 3948 Riverdale on a report of threats that were made to the [staff]. {I was advised that a Greenfield PD officer had responded and was on the scene.} Also, I was advised that the suspect ( ) had threatened to show up at 1400 hours and blow up the Riverdale office.

[ ] identify staff
{ } omit since the officer wasn't there
( ) name suspect

On arrival at the scene, [I was unable to locate a Greenfield PD officer and was told that he had left to check the suspect's address.] I interviewed the staff at the M. A. Lewis Clinic, 3948 Riverdale, and could find no one who had been directly threatened. I talked with Dr. Mary Matthews, M. D. and Dr. Fred Sitton, M. D., and they related the following information:

[ ] change or omit this sentence since you omitted the one above.

Shelia Adams had recently been transferred to the care of Dr. Sitton and was seen at the Lewis Clinic Emergency Room on 04-15-92, by Dr. Sitton for a condition related to a seizure disorder -- [near toxic level of Phenobarbital in her system. S. Adams is deaf and reads lips but telephonically communicates by the use of her fiancee, Marc Williams.] While in the Lewis Clinic ER, S. Adams was accompanied by her fiancee {_}. (Dr. Sitton said that M. Williams was irate about having to come in at

Writer needs to show that the para. was Dr. Sitton's version.
[ ] omit
{ } name fiancee
( ) Combine these ideas

HANDOUT 3:7, p. 2

the late hour and then get nothing by way of drugs to take care of his fiancee's headache. Dr. Sitton said that M. Williams was irrational confused and may have been mentally impaired in some way). Dr. Sitton said that the couple refused to cooperate with the Lewis staff and complained to the nurse manager about the substandard care they have been given. Dr. Sitton advised that after he left, M. Williams threatened the Lewis staff verbally making references to shooting some one. Dr. Sitton said that he was called at the M. A. Lewis Clinic at about noon on 04-16-92 by the nurse manager and was told about the threat.

Dr. Matthews then advised me that M. Williams had been calling the M. A. Lewis Clinic most of the day and talked with several of the staff including herself and made no threat of violence. Dr. Matthews said that M. Williams even denied most of the previous night's contact and retracted any threat that he might have made. Dr. Matthews said that M. Williams was upset about the care that they had received and needed something stronger than Tylenol to take care of Adam's headaches. Dr. Matthews also added that she talked with William's sister and she was also irrational and upset. Dr. Matthews stated that the couple had been advised that S. Adams will be refused treatment in the future at the M. A. Lewis Clinic. Dr. Matthews sent home all employees from the center except those necessary to reschedule appointments and close up.

Rewrite paragraph and vary sentence beginnings

HANDOUT 3:7, p. 3

[While on the scene], Greenfield PD Officer R. Smith 61-205 called and reported that the address given by the M. A. Lewis Clinic was the address of Williams' associate and that Williams had not lived there for some time. He also reported that the associate told him that Williams had a history of drug abuse and that he did own weapons, a hunting rifle, a .38 revolver and a .22 semi-auto. Smith added that the associate told him that Williams bragged about killing a person in a drug deal. Smith said that the phone number was a good one and that Williams' actual address was in South Haven.

[ ] not necessary not clear who was on the scene

Rewrite para. to eliminate needless repetition

I contacted Sgt. R. Robbins with the information I had obtained and a request was teletyped to South Haven PD to pick up Williams at his South Haven address based on a warrant out of Greenfield.

Officer M. Anthony and myself remained at the M. A. Lewis Clinic until the remaining staff left for the night.

Who is Officer. Anthony?

At 1715 hours South Haven PD advised that the suspect Williams had been arrested.

LESSON IV

OBJECTIVES: The students will discover ways to edit a report so that the writing is more effective.

The students will identify two areas in their writing that are problem areas and in the coming weeks will strive to improve these areas.

MATERIALS: Handouts
Overhead projector
Overhead transparency
Students' sample writings from the first class
Evaluation forms

TIME: 2 hours

ACTIVITIES:

1. Give back the students' answers to the questions on the article "Get It All, and Get It Right." Go over the answers.

2. Put on the board the topic for today's lesson -- **Revising and Editing, Creating Concise Language**. Discuss the power of words and the importance of having a wide vocabulary. Give students the handout, **Words--Tools for Communication.** (Handout 4:1) Briefly go over the handout.

3. On the overhead show students the paragraphs on specific and abstract language. (Make an overhead transparency using Handout 4:2.) Discuss the difference in the three examples.

4. Give students the handouts on **Using Specific Details.** (Handout 4:3) Go over the parts and have students do the exercises.

5. Have students take out their revisions of the **Significant Incident Report**. They are to continue their revisions using the information just covered in class. Write on the board these suggestions:

   a. Check to find passive verbs. Circle them. Then rewrite the sentence if active is a better choice.

   b. Check to see if there is wordiness in the sentences; if so, eliminate it.

   When they have finished, collect their work. This will become a part of their evaluation.

6. Have students go over their first writing sample, marking things they would change. Help them identify the areas that they need to work on as they write their reports.

7. Give out the evaluations and have students fill them out. (Handout 4:4)

HANDOUT 4:1

WORDS -- TOOLS FOR COMMUNICATION

VOCABULARY

Adequate vocabulary and the selection of the appropriate word help the reader understand.

Extensive reading particularly in the police field helps to **enlarge** vocabulary.

NEW WORDS

Find a new word. Then learn how to use it, and use it often in writing and speaking.

EXACT WORDS

In report writing it is important to find the exact word that expresses the meaning of the sentence. Avoid always using the first word that comes to mind. Making the right choice between words can make a report convey the exact ideas more clearly.

For example: These words mean approximately the same, but which one presents the most positive image?

thin, lean, skinny, undernourished, slender

Consider whether a word like mumbled or whispered might be a better choice than a general word like talked.

Making the appropriate choice between words can make a report convey the exact ideas more clearly. Think "Who will read what I write?" Since many reports will have a broad, general audience, they must be written in such a way that they can be read and understood by all.

HANDOUT 4:1, p. 2

ABSTRACT VS CONCRETE

Avoid words that are abstract. Use words that help a reader respond through one of the five senses -- sight (most important,) sound (next in importance,) taste, smell, and touch.

WORDINESS

Watch wordiness. Conciseness is different from brevity. A piece of writing can be brief by leaving out information. A concise piece of writing tells everything but tells it in less space. When being concise, one word can often do the work of several and do it better.

For example:

He is a man who has always valued his career above his family.

He has always valued his career above family.

There was nothing in the room where I once slept that seemed familiar to me.

Everything in my old room seemed foreign.

TECHNICAL WORDS

Avoid technical words and abbreviations that a reader may not understand unless you briefly define them when you use them the first time. If you wish to use an acronym that would be unfamiliar to some readers, write it out the first time. Then put the acronym in parentheses after the written words. When you use only the acronym later in the piece of writing, the reader will understand it.

For example:

Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)

HANDOUT 4:1, p. 3

STANDARD USE OF LANGUAGE	Avoid language that is too formal. Also only use slang, colloquial terms, and vulgar words when quoting someone's exact words.
TRITE WORDS	Avoid trite, overused expressions.
ACTION VERBS	Use action verbs. Watch the use of the verb "to be" (is, am, are, was, were, be, been) and verbs where the subject is not the actor.

For example:

The victim was taken to the emergency room.
(In this sentence how this action occurred is vague. There is no actor in the sentence.)

Officer Compton **took** the victim to the emergency room.
(In this sentence Officer Compton is the actor. It is clear how the action occurred.)

RULE OF THUMB

WHEN WRITING, USE THE MOST BASIC WORD THAT CLEARLY CARRIES THE MEANING.

not **interrogate**	but	**question**
not **utilize**	but	**use**
not **modify**	but	**change**

HANDOUT 4:2
(for transparency)

ABSTRACT LANGUAGE
(much too general)

The victim had been in a terrible accident. He was hurt very badly and needed immediate medical attention. The officer called for help.

SPECIFIC
(better but still not specific enough)

James Smith had been in a terrible automobile accident. I saw that he was pinned in the car. I made him as comfortable as possible and asked Officer Jones to call for help.

SPECIFIC
(much better)

James Smith had crashed his '87 ford van into a telephone pole at the corner of Kipling and Alameda. When I arrived at the scene and checked the victim, he was bleeding profusely from his nose and head and was trapped in his car. I put a folded jacket under his head, covered him as best I could, and asked Officer Jones to call for an ambulance and the Jaws of Life.

HANDOUT 4:3

USING SPECIFIC DETAILS

Specific details can add substance to writing. Details support those vague abstractions that have no meaning without specific language. For example, if we confront a boss with a concern, we feel as if we've been brushed off if the reply is "I will give the matter my full consideration." Unless we know exactly what "full consideration" means, the answer gives us little satisfaction.

In order for generalizations to have meaning, they must be supported with specific details. Look at the following examples.

ABSTRACT LANGUAGE (much too general)

The victim had been in a terrible accident. He was hurt very badly and needed immediate medical attention. The officer called for help.

SPECIFIC (better but still not specific enough)

James Smith had been in a terrible automobile accident. I saw that he was pinned in the car. I made him as comfortable as possible and asked Officer Jones to call for help.

SPECIFIC (much better)

James Smith had crashed his '87 ford van into a telephone pole at the corner of Kipling and Alameda. When I arrived at the scene and checked the victim, he was bleeding profusely from his nose and head and was trapped in his car. I put a folded jacket under his head, covered him as best I could, and asked Officer Jones to call for an ambulance and the Jaws of Life.

HANDOUT 4:3, p. 2

Read the following generalizations and invent two or three specific details for support. Write down the sentence number and the generalization. Then add two or three sentences that support the generalization. Use your imagination and invent good, specific details.

1. Officer _____ is a very fine police officer.

2. Buster Cantor is a very bad character.

3. _____ is the best supervisor I have ever had.

Now change the following sentences to more specific language. The underlined words are abstract and have little meaning. As you rewrite the sentences, use concrete words that show what you mean.

1. The hospital employee I interviewed was very angry.

2. The gang member had caused a lot of trouble in his neighborhood.

3. Dr. James said that Richards was irrationally confused.

WORDINESS

Some individual people who have organized and put together written reports use more words than are absolutely essential and necessary in those reports that they (individual people) are writing. They repeat the same idea saying it over and over. They don't actually say or repeat the same words or phrases. They merely take an idea and substitute various and diverse phrases where a simple word would complete or demonstrate the meaning of the idea exactly. Though many writers think this type of writing will impress and get a positive response from their reader, modern contemporary writers know that good writing should never be wordy. It should be concise and say what it has to say. Then say no more.

What did you think about the preceding paragraph? It is doing exactly what it says not to do. There are examples of wordiness everywhere. Take a pencil and improve the paragraph by marking out words and groups of words that are not essential.

PRUNE THOSE SENTENCES

Some words are like undesired branches on a plant that need to be removed. Unnecessary words in a piece of writing sap the energy from the words around them. They can easily be removed from the sentence just by omitting them.

Mark out the extra words in the following sentences.

1. Her eyes were blue in color.
2. His height was 6' 2" tall.
3. The man was in an irrational state of mind.
4. The teenager talked to me about majoring in the field of criminology.
5. Often in a police report the time of the incident is a very important factor.

USING CLAUSES VS. USING WORDS OR SHORT PHRASES

Changing clauses to a phrase or even a single word can eliminate wordiness and make writing more concise. Occasionally you may want to leave the clause for emphasis, but often moving it and changing it tightens the sentence.

For example: **He described her as a girl <u>who had blue eyes</u>** can be changed to: **He described her as a <u>blue-eyed</u> girl.**

Rewrite the following sentences changing the clause to eliminate wordiness.

1. May Sweeney is a woman whose testimony can be important to our case.

2. Anger is an emotion that can cause great harm.

3. The young man is an extremely ambitious person, and he has become involved with known criminals.

ACTIVE VS. PASSIVE VOICE

When speaking and writing English, we most often have our subjects perform an action.

John threw the ball.
Sue wrote her report.
Fred drove around for hours.

Sometimes, though, we change the verb in such a way that the subject is no longer actor. These verbs are called passive verbs. They always use some form of the verb "to be" (is, am, are, was, were, be, been) and the past participle form of the verb.

The ball was thrown by John.
The report was written by Sue.
The car was driven around for hours.

HANDOUT 4:3, p. 5

Remember that the verb is the action word in the sentence. Underline the verbs in the six sentences above.

Overusing the passive verb can slow writing down, leave it without energy, and cause wordiness. It is much better to say, "John's reckless driving endangered several people standing on the corner" than to say, "Several people standing on the corner were endangered by John's reckless driving."

In some situations the passive verb is preferred. These are often situations when the speaker or writer is trying to lessen the impact of some catastrophe or when the actor is not very important to the sentence.

Your home was destroyed by fire.
The young man was killed in an accident.
I was dispatched to the crime scene.

In the following paragraph circle all of the passive verbs. Then rewrite the paragraph changing the verbs from passive to active.

At 0900 I was contacted on the phone by James Tripp. His girlfriend had been taken to the emergency room round 0830 and was given treatment for a broken leg. Tripp had been called at work by a friend. The emergency room was quickly contacted by Tripp, but when the phone was answered, nothing was said to help him understand more about the accident. Since he was shaken by the whole event, I was called to help him get the facts of the accident.

HANDOUT 4:4

STUDENT EVALUATION--POLICE REPORT WRITING

Please rate the following statements by circling the appropriate number on a scale from 1-5. Five (5) means very beneficial and one (1) means that you received little or no benefit.

1.	I was satisfied with the information I received about writing.	1 2 3 4 5
2.	The instructor addressed specific questions that I had.	1 2 3 4 5
3.	The instructor made it easy to understand how to use writing techniques effectively.	1 2 3 4 5
4.	The instructor related the course content to my work.	1 2 3 4 5
5.	The instructor used handouts and activities effectively.	1 2 3 4 5
6.	This course helped me understand more about	
	a. how to use punctuation	1 2 3 4 5
	b. how to organize business letters, memos, and reports	1 2 3 4 5
	c. how to make my language concise	1 2 3 4 5
7.	I would rate this course as	
	a. interesting to me	1 2 3 4 5
	b. useful to me on the job	1 2 3 4 5
	c. more helpful than I expected	1 2 3 4 5

8. What was the most useful part of the course?

_____

_____

HANDOUT 4:4, p. 2

9. What was the least useful part of the course?

_____

_____

10. If you could change anything about this program, what would it be?

_____

_____

_____

11. Would you recommend this course to a co-worker? Yes___ No___
Why or why not

_____

_____

_____ _____

(name optional) (date)

EVALUATION

The following will be used to evaluate the student's awareness of the writing process as it applies to his/her specific writing needs:

1. The responses of the student to the questions on the article "Get It All, and Get It Right."

2. The student's revision of the **Significant Incident Report**.

3. The student's ability to identify areas in his or her writing that need improvement.

4. The responses of the student on the evaluation of the course.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Gammage, Allen Z. *Study Guide for Basic Police Report Writing.* Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1975.

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Murdock, Michael L. *Effective Writing For Business and Government.* 2nd Ed. Washington, D.C.: Transemantics, Inc., 1978.

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Rutledge, Devallis. *The New Police Report Manual.* Placerville, CA: Custom Publishing Co., 1987.

Sanderlin, David. *Spelling for Law Enforcement: A Self-teaching Guide.* Shelter Cove, CA: Innovative Systems, 1987.

The Write Stuff: Memos and Short Reports. Curriculum from New Mexico State University, 1991.

APPENDIX

The following appendix contains additional reports and handouts that the teacher may find useful. It also contains answer keys for handouts 3:3 and 4:3.

APPENDIX 1

THE FOLLOWING REPORT IS WELL-WRITTEN. IT HAS ALL OF THE NECESSARY INFORMATION AND IS WRITTEN IN NARRATIVE FORM. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, AREAS THAT NEED POLISHING. IDENTIFY THOSE AREAS AND EXPLAIN HOW YOU BELIEVE THE WRITER SHOULD CHANGE THEM TO HAVE A STRONGER REPORT.

On 02-21-94, at approximately 1610 hours, I (Officer M. Jones, 75-2) was advised by emergency room Physician Sidney Jacobs that he had a patient, Mark Olsen, who he would be removing a bullet from. Dr. Jacobs wished to know if the bullet fragments needed to be handled as evidence.

Investigation revealed that Mr. Olsen had been shot in the right buttock on 02-16-94, at Parkway and I-40. The jurisdiction of the occurrence was verified as being Fernwood Police Department's.

As the bullet was removed by Dr. Jacobs it was placed into a specimen cup filled with gauze. He then turned the cup containing the bullet over to Dr. Sam Emerson, the Emergency Room attending physician. Dr. Emerson opened the cup, verified the contents, closed the cup and then turned it over to me. I sealed the cup (without opening it) with two patient stickers labeled appropriately. This specimen was then placed into evidence bag #TB83726, and sealed.

About 5 minutes later, Dr. Jacobs informed me that he had found another bullet fragment. He packaged the second fragment in the same manner as the first, in my presence. I then sealed the cup with patient stickers, placed it in evidence bag #TB83728, and then sealed that bag.

Both specimen labels were initialed and dated by me. The specimen containers did not leave my possession until they were locked into the police department's locked evidence drawer #3 at about 1815 hours.

I obtained written statements from both Dr. Jacobs and Dr. Emerson.

According to Mr. Olsen the Fernwood detective handling the case is a Detective Gettys in the Crimes Against Persons Bureau; the number is 492-9482. Detective Gettys needs to be advised that we are in custody of this evidence.

This report needs editing and revision.

At approx. 1530 hours I, J. White (75-5) responded to room 2946 to stand by with Evelyn Todd from Fernwood Social Services who was here to place a baby on a protective hold. The parents of the baby, Jay Brown and Sue Rich had yet to be informed of the hold and a possibility of controversy existed. I met with Officer Smith (30-21) from the Fernwood Police and Evelyn Todd in room 4987 and after a brief consultation the parents were called into the room. The parents were advised that their child, Susan Brown was being taken into protective custody and that their visitation rights were going to be withheld for up to 72 hours. The case is being turned over to Fernwood County Social Services for investigation and final disposition. At 1740 hours the parents were escorted out of University Hospital.

Note: It was this Officer's observation that the mother was more prone towards violence than the father.

APPENDIX 3

EDITING/REVISION CHECK

Organization

Is the report in chronological order? _____

Have I varied sentence beginnings? _____

Style

Have I eliminated wordiness and unnecessary repetition? _____

Have I used specific details? _____

Have I selected basic words that communicate my meaning? _____
For example: question rather than interrogate

Have I used active rather than passive verbs? _____

Mechanics

Can I find a rule for each comma I have used? _____

Have I used apostrophes appropriately? _____

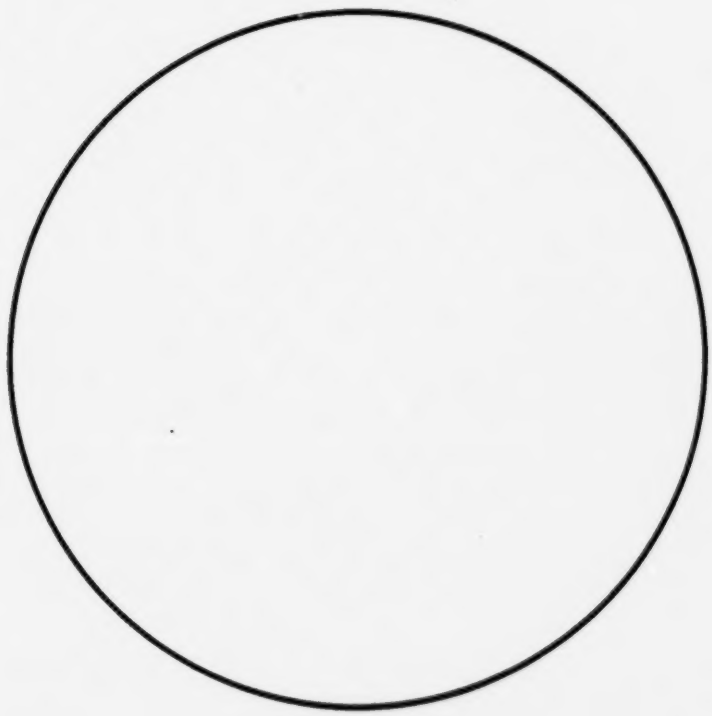
Have I explained all unclear abbreviations and technical terms? _____

APPENDIX 4

How Do I Spend My Writing Time?

Draw a pie chart to show how you spend your time when you need to write something. You might include time you spend

- planning: analyzing the situation and gathering information
- organizing: developing outlines or strategies
- procrastinating: cleaning your desk, getting coffee, doing other stuff
- drafting: writing rough first drafts
- rereading: sometimes reading aloud
- revising: reworking and improving the drafts
- editing: correcting grammar, spelling, punctuation



Taken from: *The Write Stuff: Memos and Short Reports*

Planner/Drafters vs. Drafter/Revisers

Check off behaviors in each column that describe your typical writing behaviors.

Planner/Drafters	Drafter/Rewriters
☐ I tend to make outlines, flowcharts, or diagrams	☐ I like to just start writing.
☐ I think for a long time before I start writing	☐ I usually throw away several starts before I am happy.
☐ I like to analyze my audience: who they are, what they want, what they need to do.	☐ I can't seem to stop fiddling -- making changes, scratching out sentences, adding information.
☐ Once I start writing, it comes out pretty much in final form.	☐ How can I know what I mean until I see what I say?
☐ The only revising I tend to do is correcting spelling and grammar.	☐ I tend to do major revision: moving whole sections around, deleting large parts, changing my focus or purpose.
☐ It seems to take forever to decide what to write.	☐ I tend to lose my train of thought because I keep editing sentences.
☐ I spend a long time trying to get started -- I often procrastinate.	☐ My desk ends up with a huge messy pile of paper and scraps.

Taken from: *The Write Stuff: Memos and Short Reports*

APPENDIX 6

A SAMPLE STUDENT REVISION OF HANDOUT 3:6

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT REPORT

On April 16, 1992, at approximately 1330 hours, I (Sgt. David Johnson) was dispatched to the M.A. Lewis Clinic, room 212, at 3948 Riverdale, on a report of threats made to the Lewis Clinic staff. I was further advised that the suspect stated he would be at the clinic at 1400 hours on April 16, 1992, to blow up the clinic.

On arrival to the Lewis Clinic I interviewed Dr. Mart Matthews and Dr. Fred Sitton. They related the following information:

Patient Shelia Adams had recently transferred to the care of Dr. Sitton and he saw her at the Lewis Clinic emergency room on April 15, 1992. On this date she was accompanied by her fiancée, Mr. Marc Williams. Dr. Sitton said that Mr. Williams was very irate about being unable to get any drugs to take care of his fiancée's headache. Dr. Sitton said that the couple was very irrational and refused to cooperate with the emergency room staff.

Dr. Sitton stated the nurse manager called him on April 16, 1992, at about 1200 hours and told him that Mr. Williams had threatened to shoot someone at the Lewis Clinic. This threat was made after Dr. Sitton had talked to Mr. Williams on April 15, 1992, and before Mr. Williams and Ms. Adams had left the Lewis Clinic.

Dr. Matthews advised me that Mr. Williams had been calling the Lewis Clinic most of the morning of April 16, 1992, and had talked with several

of the staff. At no time during their conversations did he make any threats of violence. She also said that Mr. Williams denied most of his actions of the previous night and retracted any threats that he might have made. Mr. Williams stated that he was just concerned with Ms. Adams' treatment on April 15, 1992.

An N.C.I.C. - C.C.I.C. clearance of Mr. Williams revealed an outstanding warrant by the Greenfield P.D.. A check of the telephone number given by Mr. Williams revealed a South Haven address. A teletype message was sent to the South Haven P.D. requesting that their agency attempt to pick up Mr. Williams at the South Haven address based on the alleged threats and the outstanding warrant from the Greenfield P.D.

At 1715 hours April 16, 1992, the South Haven P.D. advised that Mr. Williams had been arrested.

ANSWER KEY

FOR QUESTIONS: "Get It All, and Get It Right," Lesson III, Handout 3:3, pages 1-2.

1. a. What kind of permanent record should I prepare for this incident?
   b. How can I best show the court what happened so they can draw their own conclusion?
   c. How can I make the report clear enough so that anyone can understand it?

2. a, b, and d should be circled.

3. Chronological.

4. Short

5. Past

6. Active voice is the form of the verb when the subject performs the action. Passive voice is the form of the verb when the subject receives the action.

7. Active

8. A writer shows the reader the actions that occurred so that the reader can draw her own conclusions about the event.

9. Yes, because proofreading helps the writer find and correct those little errors that detract from an officer's professional image.

10. Errors in a report imply that if the writer was careless in his report writing, he might have been careless in his investigation.

ANSWER KEY

FOR QUESTIONS: "Using Specific Details," Lesson IV, Handout 4:3, pages 2-3.

On page 4:3, p.2, answers will vary. The two sentences that the students add should be more specific than the one written on the handout.

Possible answers for the sentences on page 4:3, p. 2 that change the abstract terms to more concrete words.

1. Nurse Rogers, whom I interviewed, stomped out of the room and slammed the door.
2. A member of the Falcons slashed the tires on all of the cars on our block.
3. Dr. James said that Richards muttered some strange words then tried to climb out a window.

Prune those sentences, Handout 4:3, p. 3.

1. Her eyes were blue.
2. He was 6'2" tall. **or** His height was 6'2".
3. The man was irrational.
4. The teenager talked to me about majoring in criminology.
5. Often in a police report, time is very important. **or** In a police report the time of the incident is very important.

ANSWER KEY

Using Clauses Vs. Using Words or Short Phrases, Handout 4:3, pages 3-4.

1. May Sweeney's testimony can be important to our case.

2. Anger can cause great harm.

3. An extremely ambitious person, the young man has become involved with know criminals. (This is only one possible answer.)

Active Vs. Passive Voice, Handout 4:3, pages 4-5.

Students should underline the following verbs.

threw	wrote
drove	was thrown
was written	was driven

Students should circle the following passive verbs in the paragraph on Handout 4:3, page 5.

was contacted	had been taken
was given	had been called
was contacted	was answered
was said	was shaken
was called	

One possible way to rewrite the paragraph and change the passive verbs to active.

At 0900 James Tripp contacted me by phone. His girlfriend had broken her leg in an accident, and someone had taken her to the emergency room at 0830. A friend had called Tripp at work to tell him about the accident, and he had quickly called the emergency room. The person he spoke with said little to help him understand more about the accident. Very upset, Tripp called me to help him get the details of his girlfriend's injuries.